

Consumer Alert

Providing consumers with knowledge to make informed choices and decisions.

Celebrating 31 Years of Service

A Publication of the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs

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To receive a free subscription to the *Consumer Alert*, e-mail consumer_alert@dca.state.sc.us



The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) has introduced **Tele-Tips**—an automated telephone service that allows the department to continue to provide excellent service to the citizens of South Carolina. Tele-Tips allows consumers to call the department and receive recorded information on a variety of consumer related issues **24 hours, 7 days a week**. Topics include how to file a complaint, debt collection, purchase of vehicles and information on fraud. Tele-Tips goal is to make receiving helpful information easy, fast, and accessible for everyone. Anna Albers, Director of Web Services stated, "This is another example of the Department's use of technology to meet the increasing demands of the citizens of this State."

To access Tele-Tips, consumers can call **803.734.4215 or 1.888.734.4215 (toll-free in SC)** and follow the prompts. For more information contact the department at 803.734.4200 or 1.888.922.1594 (toll-free in SC) or visit our Website at www.scconsumer.gov.

Login to

Ask Consumer Affairs

Think you have been a victim of a scam or just need general information about fraud protection? Than log on to Ask Consumer Affairs, an interactive forum that provides you with great consumer information. At the SCDCA website www.scconsumer.gov, click on LIVE HELP. A communication specialist is there to assist you with any question you might have.

Consumers SHRED The Risk of Identity Theft



Consumers respond in tons in an effort to prevent identity theft.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) in partnership with Global Paper Shredding Inc. and Confidential Solutions Unlimited Inc. (CSU) hosted Columbia's first-ever Shred Day on June 1, 2006.

Shred Day turned out to be a monumental success. With a reported four tons of personal information shredded, consumers in Columbia have taken one of the major steps in preventing identity theft.

Consumers and businesses were invited to bring confidential documents to one of three locations, the South Carolina State Housesouth steps, the Department of Consumer Affairs parking lot and the Wal-Mart on Forest Drive parking lot, to have them shredded, free of charge. Consumers were urged to bring check stubs, bank statements, credit card offers, floppy disks, CDs and old pill bottles and watch them be shredded. The on-site document destruction process was quick and efficient. What could have taken consumers hours to shred at home, only took 15 minutes to destroy.



South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs

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803.734.4200 or 1.800.922.1594 toll free in SC

About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection Code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education. For more information, visit www.scconsumer.gov.

With Identity Theft becoming the fastest growing white collar crime in America, it's important that all consumers take a proactive approach and protect themselves. Shredding is just one of the major steps that consumers can take to guard themselves and not become a victim. For more information on Identity Theft and other consumer issues contact SCDCA at 803.734.4200 or 1.800.922.1592. Or visit us on the web at www.sconsumer.gov.



The Truth About Cell Phones And The Do-Not-Call Registry

Despite e-mails circulating around the Internet, consumers should not be concerned about telemarketers calling their cell phones. The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) wants to reiterate despite claims, cell phone numbers will not be released to telemarketers, and it is not necessary that consumers place their cell phone numbers on the National Do Not Call (DNC) Registry.



The truth is your cell phone numbers are NOT being released to telemarketers and there is no deadline in which you must register your cell phone on the DNC registry. Regulations from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) prohibit most telemarketers from calling consumers on their cell phones. Also the national associations representing telemarketers have stated that their clients do not plan to start calling consumers on their cell phones.

Consumers should be aware that there is only one DNC registry and not one separate for cell phones. The DNC registry does allow both cell phones and landlines to be registered. In order to register their numbers on the registry, consumers must call from the number that they want to register. If consumers decide to register online they must respond to the confirmation e-mail sent to them.

There have been talks by the telecommunications industry to possibly create a wireless 411 directory. According to the FCC, even if this happens, most telemarketing calls to your cell phone will still be illegal. Your number would not be included in a wireless 411 directory unless you request it, and the directory would not be available to telemarketers.

For more information about the National DNC Registry contact the SCDCA at (803) 734.4200 or (800) 922.1594 (toll free in SC).

Consumer Product Safety Commission and Office Depot Recalls a Computer Desk and Chair Set

The CPSC and Office Depot have issued a voluntary recall on a Computer Desk and Chair Set sold at the Office Depot stores nationwide. The seat on the chair can break and fall, causing an individual to fall and suffer injuries. The recalled three-piece set includes a desk, computer stand and chair. The model number (NF913232) is located on the product's box. The chair in the office set is gray with a black seat and a silver tubular metal frame. The desk was sold at the Office Depot stores nationwide from June 2005 through August 2005 for about \$80. Consumers should stop using the chair immediately and contact any Office Depot to receive a gift card for the full price of the desk set. For more information consumers may contact Office Depot at 1.800.944.3340 between 9 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. Monday – Friday, or log on to the firm's Web site at www.officedepot.com.

Come Join SCDCA for After Hours

TUESDAY SESSIONS: Monthly at 5:45 p.m.

August 15: Used & New Cars: Myths, Lemon Law, Rip-Offs, and Vehicle Repair
September 19: Debt Collection: What Debt Collectors cannot do, & consumer rights

ENCORE SATURDAY SESSIONS: From 10 a.m.-12 noon

September 16: Used & New Cars: Myths, Lemon Law, Rip-Offs, and Vehicle Repair

These **FREE** consumer education seminars are presented at SCDCA. For more information contact the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs at 803.734.4200 or log on to www.sconsumer.gov.

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South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs Commission

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Carole C. Wells Woodruff	

B u y e r

Questions About a Business?

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs' Buyer Beware List has answers. Check the list at http://www.sconsumer.gov/buyer_beware_list.pdf in order to protect yourself as a consumer of products and services in South Carolina.

You can contact the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs at www.state.sc.us/consumer, (803) 734.4200, 1.800.922.1594 (toll free in South Carolina), or 3600 Forest Drive, P.O.Box 5757 Columbia SC 29250.